

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 50323 191539Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5323

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, US

SUBJ: SITUATION REPORT ON ARGENTINE VESSELS IN CUBA TRADE:
620(A)(3) OF FAA

REF: BA 5146 AND STATE 152021

1. SUMMARY: IN RESPONSE TO QUERY REGARDING VESSELS THAT MIGHT ALREADY HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR CUBA, FONMIN OFFICIAL RESPONDED ON JULY 16 THAT ONE VESSEL WAS ENROUTE. INFORMATION DEVELOPED ON JULY 18 BY NAVATT AND SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED BY FONMIN, HOWEVER, REVEALS VESSEL SAILED JULY 5, PRIOR TO OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH GOA AND PRIOR TO ELMA'S INFORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF MINISTRY'S PROPOSAL TO USE CHARTERED VESSELS. NAVATT INFORMATION IS THAT NO OTHER ARGENTINE VESSELS SCHEDULED FOR CUBA AT THIS TIME. WITH EXCEPTION OF "ENTRE RIOS", WHICH PRACTICALLY OUT OF PIPELINE, SITUATION IS, THEN, ESSENTIALLY AS REFLECTED IN BA 5146. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS WITH MINISTRY DESCRIBED BELOW TO EXTRACT MORE SPECIFIC COMMITMENT FROM ELMA NOT TO PUT ADDITIONAL ARGENTINE VESSELS ON CUBA RUN. MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, WITH ELMA'S ADMINISTRATIVE AGREEMENT TO PROPOSAL TO USE CHARTERED VESSELS, AND NO FURTHER ARGENTINE VESSELS SCHEDULED FOR CUBA, EMBASSY BELIEVES DEPT'S DETERMINATION OF JULY 13 THAT ARGENTINA

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 50323 191539Z

HAS TAKEN EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO REMOVE ITS VESSELS FROM TRADE

IS CORRECT AND OPERATIVE; HENCE, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT FUND-
ING FOR COLONEL'S TRIP AND OTHER PROGRAMS GO FORWARD. END
SUMMARY.

2. ON BASIS STATE 152021 EMBOFF CONSULTED WITH FONMIN OFFICIAL
EVENING JULY 13 IN EFFORT DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THERE
ANY VESSELS ON WAY TO OR LOADING FOR CUBA. OFFICIAL REPEATED
STATEMENT OF PREVIOUS EVENING THAT IT HIS UNDERSTANDING THERE
WERE NONE. HE NOTED THAT FONMINS MEMO HAD NOT FOCUSED ON VESSELS
THAT MIGHT ALREADY HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR CUBA BUT RATHER ON
EFFORT TO PERSUADE ELMA HENCEFORTH RPT HENCEFORTH TO SCHEDULE

CHARTERED RATHER THAN ARGENTINE VESSELS FOR CUBA RUN. HE RE-
PEATED STATEMENT THAT ELMA HAD INDICATED ITS AGREEMENT TO PRO-
POSAL, HAD ALREADY CHARTERED VESSEL ANDE WILL CHARTER OTHERS FOR
THAT PURPOSE. EMBOFF INDICATED APPRECIATE FONMIN'S POSITION, BUT

NOTED THAT USG WAS MAKING DETERMINATION ON ASSUMPTION THERE NO
VESSELS ENROUTE TO OR LOADING FOR CUBA. EMBASSY HAD NO INFORMATION

TO INDICATE THAT ANY WERE, BUT IT WAS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE
THAT WE HAVE OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION FROM GOA. EVENING JULY
16 FONMIN OFFICIAL CALLED TO REPORT THAT ELMA HAD INFORMED HIM
ONE ARGENTINE VESSEL WAS ENROUTE TO CUBA AND ANOTHER MIGHT BE
SCHEDULED TO LOAD. OFFICIAL SAID ELMA HAD REAFFIRMED ITS
INFORMAL AGREEMENT WITH FONMIN PROPOSAL, BUT PROTESTED THAT IT
COULD NOT MAKE TRANSITION SO QUICKLY, THAT IT COULD NOT CHANGE
WHAT ALREADY SCHEDULED.

3. IN LENGTHY EXCHANGE AT FONMIN FOLLOWING DAY (JULY 17),
EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT IF RPT IF THERE WERE INDEED STILL
VESSELS IN PIPELINE, ESPECIALLY VESSELS SCHEDULED FOR FUTURE
RUNS TO CUBA, ELMA'S INDICATION THAT HENCEFORTH IT DID NOT INTEND
TO USE VESSELS IN CUBA TRADE WOULD HAVE TO BE SEEN IN NEW

PERSPECTIVE. ELMA SHOULD DEFINE WHAT IT MEANS BY "HENCEFORTH",
I.E., THAT IT DOES NOT INTEND TO SCHEDULE ANY ARGENTINE FLAG
VESSELS AFTER GIVEN SPECIFIC DATE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 50323 191539Z

4. FONMIN OFFICIALS EXPRESSED FULL UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WAS
NEEDED. THEY INDICATED DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING CATEGORIC
GUARANTEES, BECAUSE ELMA RELUCTANT TO TIE ITS HANDS AGAINST
FUTURE EVENTUALITIES SUCH AS DIFFICULTIES IN CHARTERING,
INCREASED TRADE, ETC. THEY WERE HOPEFUL HOWEVER THAT SPECIFIC
ASSURANCES SUCH AS DESCRIBED BY EMBOFF COULD BE OBTAINED. THEY
REPEATED THAT FONMIN EARNESTLY WISHES TO AVOID PROBLEM BETWEEN
TWO GOVTS OVER THIS ISSUE AND EXPRESSED MINISTRY'S GREAT

APPRECIATION AND PROFESSIONAL ADMIRATION FOR RAPIDITY WITH WHICH USG HAD RESPONDED ON JULY 13.

5. OFFICIALS FRANKLY ADMITTED CONCERN THAT MORE ISSUE IS DISCUSSED IN EVER WIDENING CIRCLE IN GOA, AND THE HIGHER THE LEVEL AT WHICH IT IS TREATED, THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD THAT ECONMIN GELBARD AND TEAM WILL BECOME INVOLVED AND POSSIBLY UNDERCUT FONMINS EFFORTS. THEY URGED, THEREFORE THAT MATTER BE WORKED ON BELOW CABINET LEVEL FOR TIME BEING.

6. WITH PARA FIVE IN MIND, EMBASSY WOULD RECOMMEND THAT DEPT EXERCISE APPROPRIATE CAUTION IN DISCUSSING MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR ORFIL A.

7. AFTERNOON JULY 18 NAVATT INFORMED BY ARGENTINE NAVY THAT

ITS RECORDS INDICATE "ENTRE RIOS" SAILED FOR CUBA ON JULY 5. IT WAS LAST ARGENTINE VESSEL TO SAIL AND ACCORDING TO NAVY'S RECORD OF ELMA ACTIVITIES, NO RPT NO OTHER ARGENTINE FLAG VESSELS ARE SCHEDULED FOR CUBA. SINGAPORE FLAG VESSEL, THE CILAOS, HAS BEEN CHARTERED AND WILL BEGIN LOADING FOR CUBA ABOUT JULY 25.

9. ON BASIS ABOVE INFORMATION, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE SITUATION IS APPRECIABLY ALTERED FROM THAT REFLECTED IN BA 5146. "ENTRE RIOS" HAD SAILED BEFORE RPT BEFORE ELMA AGREED TO FONMINS PROPOSAL AND BEFORE OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH FONMIN. UNLESS WE WISH TO INSIST ON RETROACTIVE COMPLIANCE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE "ENTRE RIOS" SHOULD BE ANY MORE A FACTOR IN LEGAL DETERMINATION THAN ARE ARGENTINE VESSELS WHICH WENT TO CUBA IN MAY. WE THEREFORE BELIEVE ARGENTINA IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BUENOS 50323 191539Z

PROVISIONS OF 620(A)(3) AND THAT USG'S DETERMINATION TO THAT EFFECT ON JULY 13 WAS CORRECT. EMBASSY WILL KEEP PRESSURE ON FONMIN TO NAIL DOWN MORE SPECIFICALLY ELMA'S ASSURANCES NOT TO SCHEDULE ANY ARGENTINE SHIPS FOR CUBA. MEANWHILE HOWEVER WITH NO ADDITIONAL SHIPS NOW SCHEDULED FOR CUBA, WE WOULD URGE THAT FUNDING FOR TRAINING PROGRAMS SHOULD BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY.

10. AMBASSADOR HAS DELIBERATELY REFRAINED FROM RAISING QUESTION WITH VIGNES OR OTHER TOP-RANKING GOA OFFICIALS IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBILITY OF PROVOKING CONFRONTATION BETWEEN VIGNES AND GELBARD AND SO AS NOT TO PUT VIGNES IN EMBARRASSING POSITION.
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